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Safe Driving Is More Than Buying A Safe Car

By Todd Porthan, Fire Lieutenant

You did your research. You bought a safe car. You have never left home without your children strapped in their car seats. That is a great start, but it is just the beginning of safe driving. The scary fact is that every day, seven children are killed and 872 are injured in motor vehicle collisions in the United States, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Tremendous progress has been made with vehicle safety and child seats; however, technology has also worked against us, putting children at risk. Cell phones, tablets and TVs in the car are just a few distractions that have become a way of life. The National Highway Traffic Safety

Administration report inattentive drivers have caused more than 27,000 deaths since 2009.

Multitasking-caused accidents led to 448,000 injuries in 2009 alone. This has reached epidemic proportions, but we keep finding new ways to justify it. Are we going to accept these statistics as an allowable casualty of “change” or do we make a difference by changing our priorities and habits?

Did you know the brain cannot really multitask? Many of us think we are good at multitasking, but in reality, we are not. Instead, the brain is lightning fast, switching from one thing to the next. Here



is an example: it takes an average driver about .25 seconds to spot a hazard, like a child stepping into the street. It takes another .25 seconds to decide how to

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A Word From The Chief

By Edina Fire Chief Marty Scheerer

On average, you have a 1 in 14 million chance of winning big in the lottery – far less likely than getting struck by lightning. Your odds of getting struck by lightning are about 1 in 280,000, according to the National Lightning Safety Institute. About 2,000 people are killed worldwide from lightning strikes each year. Hundreds more survive, but often not without long-lasting

effects such as memory loss, dizziness, weakness, numbness or other ailments.

There are 25 million lightning flashes in the United States each year. No rain is present at the site of a flash for about 10 percent of lightning strikes. Lightning can travel as far as 10 miles in front of a storm and can reach more than five miles in length. The air temperature around lightning can be raised by as much as 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit and contain 100 million volts of electricity.

When lightning or thunder is present, avoid tall structures and trees, open fields, open structures and open water. In Edina, there have been several people and structures struck by lightning.



Marty Scheerer
Edina Fire Chief

Follow the “30-30” rule when dealing with lightning, especially when outside. An area should be evacuated when the time between the flash of lightning and the sound of thunder is less than 30 seconds. Stay evacuated until 30 minutes has passed since the last clap of thunder.

Formal planning is suggested for larger groups. Depending on the size of the group, it could take more than 10 minutes to evacuate. A lightning action plan should include access to up-to-date weather information, use of lightning detection equipment if available, designated safe areas, evacuation planning and drills.

For more information on lightning safety, visit www.ready.gov.



Fire Marshal's Corner

By Edina Fire Marshal Tom Jensen

Summer is a prime time for relaxing next to a recreational fire. It is also the peak season for recreational fire-related injuries. Taking precautions and supervising children is the best way to prevent the potential for damage and injury from recreational fires.

Before starting a recreational fire, obtain a free recreational fire permit at www.EdinaMN.gov. Before each fire, call the recreational fire hotline at 952-826-0398 to ensure the fire danger index is low with no bans in place. If the smoke from a recreational fire becomes a nuisance for neighbors, the Edina Fire Department will ask that the fire be extinguished.



All fires must be contained in a ring or pit, and be at least 25 feet from all structures. A five-foot radius around the fire must be clear of combustibles.

Keep fires no larger than three feet in diameter by two feet high. Do not start recreational fires when wind speeds are more than 15 mph. Do not use flammable or combustible liquids to kindle or rekindle a fire.

Have at least one responsible adult over 18 years old in attendance, especially if children are present. Children often do not understand the extreme heat and potential dangers of playing near open fires.

Properly extinguish a fire with water. Coals can still be hot, even days after the last visible flames are out. This proved to be a devastating lesson for the parents of 14-month-old Wyatt in 2008. He was playing in the backyard of his Eau Claire, Wis., home one morning and fell into the fire pit that had been used the night before.



Tom Jensen
Edina Fire Marshal

He got caught on the rocks lining the pit, and pushed his hands into the pit to get back up. The coals were still hot enough to cause severe burns to his hands. All 10 of his fingers required amputation. Wyatt was transported from Eau Claire to the Burn Center at the Hennepin County Medical Center for treatment. The Burn Center is a 16-bed intensive care unit that treats more than 500 victims with acute and severe burns every year.

It is important for parents to teach children about the dangers of fires and closely supervise them. Children should sit back three feet from the fire as sparks can fly through the open air and cause burns.

While outside this summer and roasting marshmallows, remember these tips and keep a close watch on children to make those summer nights are safe and more enjoyable.

For more information, contact the Edina Fire Department's Fire Prevention Bureau at 952-826-0330.

Distracted Driving... *Continued from page 1*

respond, and then three seconds for the brakes to engage. If a driver was moving at 30 mph, he or she would need 132 feet to stop. Because a distracted driver needs more time to notice the danger and process the information, she or she would require at least 203 feet in order to stop in the same situation. A recent study by Safe Kids USA shows 1 in 6 drivers in school zones were visibly distracted, talking on a phone, eating, reading, grooming or reaching into the back seat.

Advances in technology are not going to stop and life does not seem to slow. What should we do to become safer drivers? It is much easier than you would think and you may notice some great benefits.

- Take a pledge to avoid technology and habits that will distract your driving.

- If you need to answer or make a phone call, wait until you are at your destination or pull over and stop in a safe location.
- Orchestrate entertainment ahead of time by loading a CD or DVD before you drive. Change them out when you stop for gas or at a rest stop.
- Set ground rules and let your children know what appropriate behavior is for the car.
- Never leave your car running with kids inside or leave the keys in the vehicle.
- Get your child's seat inspected by a professional. Four out of five car seats are incorrectly installed. Visit www.carseatsmadesimple.org for more information.
- Raise your gaze: while driving, be prepared for what is ahead by glancing

at the car about five vehicles in front of you.

- Do not slam on the brakes; take your foot off the gas and steer out of harm's way.
- When merging, check your blind spots and find a safe opening for your car.

Accidents happen within seconds. Although we cannot prevent every one, we can reduce our risk by limiting distractions. Is responding to that text or checking the scores really worth your life or the lives of your family members and those on the road around you? Take the pledge today and share it with your friends and family. Safety starts with you!

For more information about distracted driving and how to prevent it, visit www.distraction.gov.